

# 6 Steps to Prevent Stress at Your Workplace



Mental stress has become a major issue in many workplaces. For example, according to Statistics Canada, 30.8% of Canadian employees say that most of the workday is considerably or extremely stressful. In addition to health problems, stress in the workplace reduces worker job satisfaction and productivity. And workers experiencing stress are more likely to get injured on the job.

What's less well understood is what you can do to combat the problem. A report from the International Labour Organization (ILO) provides some guidance and tools. For example, it includes a checklist of 50 'checkpoints' for stress prevention.

To use the checklist, you should assess your own workplace. The ILO Report suggests using a six-step approach:

## **Step #1: Collect the Right Data**

Collect information about the main products or services provided, work methods, the number of workers, the hours of work (including breaks and overtime) and other labour issues you deem important. Depending on the situation, additional information specific to the workplace may be added by using the space provided in the Appendix at the end of the checklist.

## **Step #2: Define the Work Areas to Be Assessed**

If possible, assess all areas of the workplace for stress-related risk factors. If that's not viable, say, because the workplace is too large, limit the assessment to specific work areas that you should identify in consultation with management, union or other employee representatives, members of the JHSC and other personnel who can provide key insight.

## **Step #3: Conduct Initial Walk-Through or Discussion**

Read through the checklist and spend some time walking through the work areas or discussing stress at work before starting to use the checklist.

#### **Step #4: Record Your Check Results**

Read each item carefully. Mark NO or YES under 'Do you propose action' If the measure has already been taken properly or isn't needed, mark NO. If you think the measure is worthwhile, mark YES. Use the space under 'Remarks' to write your suggestion or note its location.

#### **Step #5: Select Priorities**

Among the items marked YES, choose the ones that are likely to offer the most important benefits and mark these as PRIORITY.

#### **Step #6: Hold Group Discussion on Results**

Discuss the checklist results with others who have taken part in the walk-through or discussion. Agree on existing good points and on the measures to be taken based on the checklist. Communicate with management and workers about the proposed measures and follow up on the implementation of these measures.

#### **OHS Insider Resources**

For more information on stress and psychological safety in the workplace, go to our Psychological Safety Compliance Centre, which includes:

- A psychological harassment policy
- An infographic on psychological safety
- An infographic on depression
- A video on the new psychological health and safety standard in Canada.